

A Long Night for ESO

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Home, sweet home! In October, the Garching campus, that is home to the ESO headquarters in Germany, celebrated its golden anniversary. The campus has indeed existed since 1957, when the 'Garching Atom-egg' was inaugurated. It was the first nuclear installation in Germany and a pioneer in nuclear research.

Since then, the Garching Campus has developed extensively, welcoming several Max-Planck Institutes (Astrophysics, Extraterrestrial Physics, Plasma Physics, Quantum Optics), several institutes of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences, the Federal Research Institute for Food Chemistry, and the Bavarian Centre of Applied Energy Research, to name just a few. In the course of the years, also several departments of both Munich universities (Mathematics, Computer Science, Physics, Chemistry, Mechanical Engineering) settled here, conferring on Garching the title of a University city. There are now about 4 000 people who work on the campus, in addition to the 8 500 students, making the campus almost as populous as the town of Garching itself.

Albeit ESO only joined the Campus in 1980, it participated fully in the activities for the 50th Anniversary, organising or taking part in several public events. The set of activities started on 26 September, with a gala evening, featuring high-level politicians, including the then Prime Minister of Bavaria, Dr Edmund Stoiber, and the German Federal Secretary of State for Research, Dr Thomas Rachel (see Figure 1). On 2nd of October, ESO organised a round-table discussion on the topic of "Arts and Science". The discussion was moderated by a well-known space-science journalist, Dirk Lorenzen. Hans-Ulrich Käufl from ESO responded to Ernst-Peter Fischer, Dieter Ronte, and Elmar Zorn, on the interplay between the two very different sensitivities and how they can apprehend the world. The event, which was broadcast on Bavarian TV, was very successful, drawing participants



Figure 1: The Mayor of Garching, Manfred Solbrig, addressing the audience of invited guests at the gala event on 26 September.

from all over Germany and abroad, and allowed people to see the ESO Headquarters building in a new and unique setting: on this occasion, paintings by Rita Adolff-Wollfarth, a German painter who also participated in the discussion, were on display in the building.

Another round-table event took place eleven days later, this time organised by the whole campus. Under the title "From Garching to Europe, Science in a Globalised World", a panel of six science policy experts discussed how the Garching campus might evolve in the future, including its role in the international fabric of science.

On the same day, 13th October, the campus organised a 'Long Night of Science', running from 18:00 till midnight. As usual, ESO, with the participation of staff from all the divisions, set up a wide range of activities. The visitors could watch the latest ESO movie or attend short scientific talks on many subjects – from the history of the telescope to the principles of interferometry, from the study of exoplanets to the interaction of galaxies.

They could also glance at the exhibition, featuring panels and models, or talk with the many staff present. They could address their questions to Nancy Ageorges in Paranal over the video link, with Christian Hummel in Garching taking the role of moderator. Activities were also organised for the young, such as puzzles, a stamp quest, a quiz and a planetarium show. As the weather was fine and the skies clear, the members of the AGAPE observational astronomy group were able to share their enthusiasm with visitors (see photo on page 47). The Charity group also set up a very successful stand, selling a variety of food from different European countries that had been generously prepared by many ESO staff and their families. Particularly popular were the Belgian waffles, whose mouth-watering smell attracted many people.

By the end of the night, about 1 800 people had visited ESO's headquarters during the 6-hour period. A remarkable achievement, since at the same time, the national soccer team was playing a qualifying match for the European Championship!